

Bill compels Administration to suspend shipments to Strategic Petroleum Reserve

Washington, DC - The U.S. House passed legislation authored by Rep. Peter Welch this evening directing the Bush Administration to temporarily suspend shipments to the Strategic Petroleum Reserve (SPR) as a short-term action to lower gas prices for consumers.

The Strategic Petroleum Reserve Fill Suspension and Consumer Protection Act of 2008, H.R. 6022, sponsored by Welch, Rep. Nick Lampson and Rep. Edward Markey, directs the Secretary of the Interior to suspend shipments to the SPR through the end of the year or until prices drop below \$75 per barrel. This action could reduce gas prices by 5 to 24 cents per gallon, according to experts.

The legislation cleared the U.S. House as gas prices reached a record high of \$3.73 per gallon.

Welch added, "Vermonters are struggling with these record high gas prices. Suspending shipments to the Strategic Petroleum Reserve is one short-term way to provide relief at the fuel pump."

The U.S. House passed Welch's bill with strong bipartisan support. Earlier today, the U.S. Senate passed companion legislation by a near-unanimous vote of 97-1. In recent weeks, and as gas prices continued to skyrocket, the SPR initiative received support from nearly 100 co-sponsors, as well as support from House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and Congressional leaders.

Filling the SPR takes 70,000 barrels of oil off the market each day and taxpayers are currently paying record prices for this oil. The reserve is 97 percent full, sufficiently full to meet our national security needs.

The SPR has been tapped or temporarily suspended by the past three U.S. presidents. In 2000, after such action, the price of oil dropped by one-third, from \$30 to \$20 per barrel.